# PEOPLE & CITY

**BY SOPHIA** 

# **PEOPLE & CITY**

This Portfolio contains some of my reports published in the newspaper and some of my photos I took during my journey.

I hope these reports and photos could show you what it looks like for Chinese people to interact with metropolis. Hopefully, you can see my determination and my potential to recording history and reality.

### CATALOGUE

1 再见,赛马场 Farewell Guangzhou Racecourse 3 这个流浪汉,有点不寻常 This Tramp is No Ordinary 5 关注老养残: 让他们放心老去 Focus On the Old Who Support the Disabled Young 8 画家李金明用画作记录广州55年变迁 The Man Who Record 55 Years' Changes of Guangzhou by Painting 10 特殊群体开趣味运动会 Interesting Games for the Special Group 11 整治35处烂尾楼掐灭火患 Regulation of 35 Unfinished Buildings to Eliminate the Cause of Fire 12 北京: 古老与现代的超现实对话 Beijing: Ancient Times Meet Mordern Times 18 上海:转角邂逅温情 Shanghai: Meet the Warmth of the City Unexpectedly 22 广州: 南方小镇生活 Guangzhou Life in Traditional South 26 南方打工,没有周末 Work without Weekends 30 海口:在陌生之地偶遇 Haikou:Meet People in an Unfamiliar Place 34 深圳:更多精彩 Shenzhen:More Exciting Things

### 再见,赛马场 Farewell, Guangzhou Racecourse



Full view of Guangzhou Racecourse.



It was on the morning when business was rare. The seller was wating for customers.



Racecourse reflected on the window of a mall. It looks like the old time was having a conversation with the modern time.



Customers were asking specific questions about the car he wanted to buy.



Published in Yangcheng Evening Newspaper, 1,1,2014 A8 Reproduced in NetEase,Sina etc. Guangzhou Racecourse Motor City in the Last Sunset of 2013

### 再见,赛马场 Farewell, Guangzhou Racecourse

It was the last sunset of 2013, and the sunshine was splendid to pave the land with golden rays. Guangzhou Racecourse would say farewell to the past, and embrace a brighter future.

The manager of Guangzhou Racecourse Motor City disclosed that, the Motor City would stop running in 1,1,2014, and would be totally closed which requires all the car store to move out before 4,1,2014.

Walking on the road of Guangzhou Racecourse, you can still think up the cheers and the races for the winning horses. Ten years ago, hundreds of horses run conveying people's hope to get rich on a bet. After that, this place has become motor city along with policy changes. Now,the era of cars is going to an end.

Being adjacent to Huangpu Road and to Zhujiang New Town, residing at such an exceptional place, Guangzhou Racecourse is guaranteed a bright future. Mr Liu is a car seller. He said,"Racecourse furnished an advantaged space and a rare opportunity for a great variety of cars to showoff their beauty. I'm reluctant to leave."

Miss Li, who had been wandering at this place lately, was thinking about purchasing a new car. She said, "This place is like a supermarket for cars. You can see all the cars, and touch them for real. Even if you would not buy one here, you can still engage in a test drive. Mr Wang was a mechanic working here for years. He said,"I have been used to working here. If the company must leave, I may have to find another job."

You could see arrays of industrial lofts, with the solid steel lattices supporting the plastic roof, where the auto mechanics clean and wax the cars or take apart them to fix up.

Whereas, no matter how reluctant to accept the reality, the development of modern city will run over whatever in its way. Nevertheless, the history here would never fade away. We could cherish our memories, and witness the cities' development.



Guangzhou Racecourse Motor City in the last sunset of 2013.



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The Special Tramp Who Read Russell

### The Special Tramp Who Read Russell



Sitting on the discarded sofa he picked up at "home", Wenbin Ma was talking about his life experience.

New year is comming, Wenbin Ma is still living under a flyover bridge, with his cat friend who comes occasionally.But he misses his dog friend named Pepe the most.

He wrote a pair of couplets for his so-called home: The Lost Paradise is Wonderland, The Most Special Home Resides Here. The horizontal scroll bearing is: Live in Seclusion. It was too obvious for a man living under a flyover on the sly, he took them off after a few days. Lately, he had been reading books and writing his autobiography. He said, he had washed dishes for some restaurant to make money, which can support him for a few months."Money is like the dust in my body, it comes and goes."

He is always very optimistic,"I am a wild horse who cannot be domesticated."



He said he felt proud of himself for reading so many books.

### 1. Build a Fancy House under a Flyover

Mr Ma's so-called home resides under a flyover bridge in Guangzhou, with a small door disguised as ordinary wall of the bridge. His "home" is well organised. It was surrounded with discarded tinfoil as wall, rustle to every gust of wind. The so-called floor was covered with red carpet. He has a bed, a sofa, a desk, and even a dressing table.

It was a warm afternoon with bright sunshine. He turned on the light, only to turn darkness into dimness. When cars passed by, a few rays of sunshine could be reflected into this small place. A wild cat broke in without any hesitation, and leaped up to sit in his laps. He stroked the cat's back and said, "There used to be a cat, a dog, a turtle, and a rabbit. They were all picked up during my garbage collecting journey." The cat was meowing, when he told her:"The reporter is here to interview me, not you."

He is satisfied with his "house" which only cost him 200 yuan in total, because most of the furniture were picked up from the dust bin. "In Guangzhou, many workers' living condition is worse than mine."



He said he had came here many times, watching the city and the people while smoking.

### 2. Vagrancy is My Dream

Wenbin Ma is different from others. When he was 15, his teacher asked them to talk about their dream. Most of his classmates dreaming about being a doctor or a teacher, he said nothing, but setting his mind to go vagabonding. In 1990, when he just turned 18, he got down on his knees to his parents and told them that he wanted to go pursuing the purpose of living. He then got up on a train with not a single money in his pocket.

He helped the train conductors to collect rubbish and beg for food. At last, he arrived at Hainan Island. Standing by the sea, he listened to the sound of wave and felt that the whole world was openning to him. That was his first time to see the ocean. Afterwards, he went to a lot of cities like Beijing, Zhengzhou, Xi'an, etc. At last, he stayed at Guangzhou.

During 25 years of vagabonding, he only went back home for 2 times. He did not know that his father had passed away until 3 years later. He said:" Being alive or being died is not controlled by ourselves. If one intended to chase dreams, he or she is supposed to give up a lot of things, including family bonding. "



He likes smoking while recalling his experience.

### 3. Reading and Dreaming

As a scavenger, Wenbin Ma must make a precarious living. He insisted on reading masterpieces even when he had no money to purchase food. Although he had not graduated from primary school, it did not prevent him from reading abstruse masterpieces, like Russell, Dante, Lu Xun etc. "The most inspiring book for me is The Spirit of Law written by Montesquieu. I had finished reading The Divine Comedy recently, which is very enlightening." Said Wenbin Ma, "I like reading philosophy books, given that philosophy helps me to touch the meaning of life. Although I am wandering along, I never feel longly. I have dreams, that is, to write a book and to make some inventions."

He would stay at home reading books or writing his autobiography when he accumulated a few money. He would get up at 7 o'clock, light up a cigarette while recalling his experience. When it comes to how to make inventions specifically, he would slur his speech and talk his dreams repeatedly full of confidence. He is pretty sure that he had created a "theorem" which is "no one else's, before or since", to depict the past, the present and the future. The inspiration of his



His sculpture originated from his beloved pet Pepe.

"theorem" comes from equilateral triangle.

### 4. He Also Create Art

The sculpture on his desk is interesting. A man carrying a huge garbage bug walking on the road with a dog, while the man has the dog's head and the dog has the man's head. It looks like a little postmodernism style. Wenbin Ma made this sculpture all by himself, using sludge in the river and the pigments he picked up.

The sculpture originated from Ma's dog Pepe. In 2007, Pepe got famous because the media reported a story about Pepe helping him to collect garbage. But days later, Pepe got lost. He kept searching for Pepe only to find nothing. At last he created a sculpture to memorize his dearest friend. "I've been wandering for such a long time that I've gotten used to the warmness and coldness of the society. In my eyes, dog is no different to human. " His another art work is "My motherland My Shackle". " I love my motherland deeply. I donated 200 yuan, which is all the money I reserved, to the Wenchuan people after that horrible earthquake in 2008. But the cruelty of reality put heavy shackles to my body and soul."



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> Focus on the Old Who Support the Disabled Young

### Focus on the Old who support the Disabled Young

It was on recent days, when the overcrowded Guangzhou Nursing Home for the Disabled supplied 20 more beds. Some of the old parents felt relieved after getting the permission for their mentally disabled children to check in-- at least, their poor children can still live there when parents passed away.

But to the ones who have not got the permission, there is still a long way to go. Some of them said helplessly, "People live for today hope for tomorrow, but we have no hope, not to mention tomorrow. Most of my peers are enjoying their late-life, while we are fighting with our life and our mentally disabled children. We got a giant infant to support. We can't afford getting old."

According the data from Guangzhou Federation of the Disabled (GFD), there was 135,600 registered mentally disabled people by 2012, with only 5 agencies owned by GFD provide nursery services to them now. Among the 5 agencies, Nursery House for the Disabled can provide 480 beds to the elderly disabled people and orphans, Center for Development of the Disabled 160 beds for the severe mentally disabled people, Corning Hospital 39 beds for the mentally rehabilitates. Aside from that, Kangyuan Occupation Therapy Stations, which serves around 4200 severe mentally disabled people, have been set up at hundreds of communities in all districts of Guangzhou.

In addition, Yuexiu District has been providing domiciliary nursing care benefit and nursery service to the disabled, Panyu District, Huangpu District and Huadu District have launched pilot project, for which collaboration with social institutions in boarding sanatorium service is being tested.

We have witnessed the endeavour of our government, but that is far from enough. Most mentally handicapped people had to rely on their parents for a living. Whereas these old people, who had dedicated their whole life to the country and the family, are calling for help. All they want is to have a roof over their children's head and to have bread on the table, after they lost the ability to take care of their children.

### Case 1 The Man who Cannot Grow up

Wei has turned 38, but he still behaves like an infant. He cannot wear his clothes by himself. He cannot speak a single word but "er" and "uh". He is always smiling in a bizarre way, with irregular arm wave.

His parents take good care of him. They have to dress him, feed him 3 times a day, wash him, and tuck him in 3 times or more a night. If he got lost, which had happened many times, they would spend day and night looking for him. This kind of life had continued for 38 years.

Wei's mother Luo is tender and brave. She said, "When Wei was born, the doctors didn't get prepared. Wei was infected with virus. He survived, yet with something wrong with his brain. " They have seen many doctors, yet was confirmed that his disability was unable to be cured.

Luo said," When I was young, I was full of passion to raise him up, even when we ran out of food. But my husband and I are both old.



▲ Luo feels worried all the time, even when Wei was having a good time by pretending to read newspaper happily.

▲ Meng used to be an architect. Her second son Feng was diagnosed with Down's syndrome. She had to satisfy every need of him, so he could behave well.

Threatened by many diseases, we were unable to take good care of him.

Wei's father Wen is 72 years old. The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in his face. He used to be a policeman, so he showed off his medals of honor with pride. He was diagnosed with liver cancer in 2011. After a series of successful surgeries, he recovered a little, but he cannot stop worrying for his son. "We have to make detailed schedules in order to see the doctors, so we can still keep an eye on him. We've already in our 70s. If we passed away, which won't be long, who would take care of him?"

After they got the permission to send their son into Guangzhou Nursing Home. They feel relieved but also a little lost. They decided to go to see him every week. But at least, they can take a day off to see their doctors without worry.

### Case 2 Turn Misery into Bigger Love

When Chao was 19, he had just graduated from high school and found himself a night job. He was going home at midnight, when he ran into a scaffold and got severely injured, because of which, his life and his parents' life was all changed. His mother Wang was taking a business trip. She came back home immediately after she was informed that her only child got injured on the brain. Chao was diagnosed with severe brain trauma, and was in danger of becoming a "vegetative" patients.

Being taken good care of by Wang, Chao woke up but lost the ability to speak and think clearly. The doctor told them that the only thing they can do was to take after him but he may never become normal again. Wang took Chao to see doctors in a lot of places, and bought various kinds of medicines which may be conducive to his recovery.

Eighteen years has passed, during which Chao is still not getting any better, whereas Wang and her husband have accrued gray hairs. Chao behaves better than most mentally disabled person. He can dress himself and feed himself. He likes pretending to read newspapers and watching football games on TV. When they went out, Chao would stay close in touch with his parents.

Chao tried to learn making handicrafts with the instructions of mental doctors. He was supposed to string the tags of clothes together, with every 1000 strings he can make 5 yuan (less than 1 dollar). He worked for 2 months, and earned 2 yuan.

Wang never thinks about giving up. All she ever thought about was how to cure her child, and how to live life to the fullest even if he can never recover. Wang had taken Chao to go travelling in a lot of places, Beijing, Shanghai, Hongkong etc. Wang said,"If we were meant to go through these difficulties, we should conquer the troubles and enjoy this journey."

In 2011, Guangzhou Federation of the Disabled invited Wang to be the president of Federation of the Relatives of Mentally Disabled to help organizing activities to relieve some burden of peers. After second thought, she took the job. Wang wants to do something to help the relatives of the disabled person by calling for attention from the mass and providing protection to their fundamental rights.

This nonprofit job took a lot of time from Wang, but Wang never complained about it. She said, "After taking over this job, I get to know more about the difficulties of other parents, most of whom are suffering more than I am. I want to spare no effort to help them. And I hope sincerely, when we are too old to take care of ourselves, and have no choice but turning to the nursing home for help, we can take our disabled children alongside. It's a long way to go. No nursing home would take the troubles to do that which increases the difficulties to the management largely. But it is most of these parents' last dream, so I will fight for it."

Recently, they got the permission to send their son into Guangzhou Nursing Home. But Wang decided to give it up, so someone else with more urgent needs can take this opportunity and take a breath.



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"My eyes would get focused automatically like cat encountering mouse at the sight of big ships"

### The Man Who Recorded 55 Years' Changes of Guangzhou by Painting

The 55 years' changes of Guangzhou are condensed into touching pictures by the painter Jinming Li, who is in his 70s and still insists on painting to tribute to this lovely city.

"Boom!" A loud sound came from outside, and the whole house started to shake. The basin carried by Li's mother was thrown out, water spilt out everywhere. Later, he came to know that the horrible sound wave came from the explosion of Haizhu Bridge which was blasted by Chinese Nationalist who were prompting mandatory evacuations.

Haizhu Bridge was the only passage to the villagers who lived on the different sides of Guangzhou River. After the explosion, they have to paddle a little boat to cross the river. In accordance with Li's memory, when he passed by, all that jumping into his view was damaged bridge piers and cracked stone fragments. It was on October,1949, when Jinming Li, a painter with high reputation now, was only seven and just came to Guangzhou with his parents. That explosion was his very first impression of this city.

### **Sketching Adventure**

Living in Guangzhou at a young age, Jinming Li has deep affection tendentiousness to ships and wharf. In the 60's when China was under strict political control, Li was a student studying at the middle school affiliated to Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. He wanted to draw a picture of the new-built Haizhu Bridge, which was under heavy guard, but he gave up for being told that he might be thrown into prison for that.

Once, a huge steamer pulled over, which had " fabulous appearance and delicate structure ". Unable to resist his temptation and curiousness, he sneaked into the ship and started painting in a secluded corner. Nevertheless, a few moments later, when he just outlined the structure, he was caught by a soldier, who took away his tools immediately, tore up his painting and yelled:" Who are you? Are you a spy?" "No, I'm just a student. I was just sketching." "Ask your teachers and parents to pick you up! There is a lot of confidentiality of our state! You cannot draw pictures here!"

Until now, "My eyes would get focused automatically like cat encountering mouse, at the sight of big ships." His brushes dipped with sincere feelings record the changes of wharfs and ships and the scenery of the city, witnessing the development of Guangzhou.

### The history of Guangzhou

When Jinming Li was still a student, his home resided in the northern border of Guangzhou. Li had to walk for nearly 10 miles to attend school with no access to other vehicles. He also had to go to Guangzhou Cultural Center twice a week, which meant another four 10-mile-walk, to instruct students' painting skills, so as to contribute to the household. Without money to buy shoes, he walked for more than 140 miles barefoot every week.

Once his family bought a pair of shoes. They took turns to wear them only in special occasions like dating with important friends. "Years later, these details came to my mind suddenly when I was taking a bus. From my observation, everyone was wearing fancy shoes, high heels, leather shoes or boots. At the exact moment, I couldn't help marveling at the rapid development of Guangzhou."

The history scenes were recorded in his mind then in his paintings when



walking barefoot. The most unforgettable one must be the blue sky. He used to gaze at the sky for a moment every time before starting to paint, worrying that no pigments, even ultramarine blue, could depict the beauty of the sky. When it came to the dusk, the chromatic clouds would transform continuously looking like flowing watercolor in his backpack. "Everywhere was suitable for sketching back then."

After graduation, he was assigned a job at Canton Trade Fair complex. He continued sketching after work, thus a lot of precious scenery was recorded in his paintings. One can travel back in time to get to know the old Guangzhou, when farmers were ploughing on their land just by looking at his paintings. The New Look for New Time

In the 90's, with the reviving of market economy, Guangzhou paved a pedestrian street for trading named Beijing Road. Li went there with excitement and tried to leave its mark on history by paintings. It was at night when this street truly shone. From his painting, one can feel the delight of everyone by the warm colors Li used to depict their blurring faces.

Li enjoys drawing passengers at subway stations, especially at the exit of Jiangnan West Station. It was during the afternoon rush hours when the stream of human flowing rapidly, many workers went through KFC restaurant, friends

### Who is Jinming Li?

He was born in Hongkong in 1942, and settled down on Guangzhou. He graduated from Guangzhou Academy of Fine

Arts, majoring in oil painting. He is a national senior artist, a

member in Chinese Artists Association, and a council member of Guangdong Artists Association. He has been painting for nearly 60 years. His artworks were displayed at home and abroad and won many special awards such as the first prize in National Arts Exhibition.

chatting with each other and laughing, migrants pointing at the map and asking questions. People gathered here and separated later. That moment frozed on his canvas for good. "People are always full of energy. With so many complicated things going on, the crowd is worth paying attention to."

### News

### "Emotional Russia" Landscape Oil Painting Exhibited on Feb. 28th

"Emotional Russia—Jinming Li's and Junsheng Lin's Landscape Oil Painting Exhibition" was inaugurated on February 28th in Guangzhou Art Academy. The exhibition displayed more than 100 realistic landscape oil paintings of small size. This exhibition will continue displaying until March 5th. Published in Yangcheng Evening Newspaper, 12,23,2013 A14

## Interesting Games for the Special Group



In the competition of Two People Carrying One Basketball Final, these adults with mental disabilities spared no effort to win the first prize.

## Regulation of 35 Unfinished Buildings to Eliminate the Cause of Fire



The policeman of Public Security Bureau of Fire Protection forbade the resident to put the explosive gas tank to the house nearby.



# <image>

# Beijing: Ancient Times Meet Mordern Times

### **Beijing Warren**

The hutong in Warrens is very narrow and cluttered, but the green plants growing lively make this place very lovely.

### Window Nanluoguxiang

Nanluoguxiang is a place filled with the aura of art.Seeing through the window, you can see that China's rich artistic past sparking with modern art.

### 798 Art Center

A man was smoking outside H·Art Center. His "cock" temperament blend in with the modern art architecture unexpectedly.





### A Beijinger

An old man living in Hutong told me that, the Courtyard was rented by the French, the remaining house was warren which is not suitable for living.

### A Monk

The monk was leaving Yonghe Palace, while I took this picture.

### Strong Incense

People from all over the country came to Yonghe Palace to beg for luckiness.When there is too much burning joss sticks, someone would carry some out.



A Dialogue · Nanluoguxiang

A fashion girl was looking at her reflection on the window, while a male model hanger was "watching" her. It is a surreal dialoge happens everyday.



A Painter Beijing YuYuantan Park

A man was drawing a picture for cherry blossoms to record the beauty of spring.



A Vendor Beijing DiTan Temple Fair The vendor was selling plastic sugar-coated berry, which showed hope for the new year.



A Stall Shanghai Bund

The rain blurred the buildings far away, but the colorful stall was conspicuous.



### Lanes·City

There are a lot stalls outside Yuyuan Garden, some selling food, some selling groceries, some selling travelling souvenirs.

### The Pedestrian Mall

The pedestrial, full use of antique architectural style, locate outside Yuyuan Garden. It sells all kind of staffs with a low price to travellers.







### A Clobberer

This clobberer had worked at the corner of the road for years. He only takes a few money to repair shoes or bags.

### The Young

After school, students nearby would go to play in the manmade fountain in front of Shanghai Museum.

### CITY · GUANGZHOU



### A Grocery Store

It was a weekday, the landlady was bored to death, whose business was not thriving. Her stall mainly sells dry foods.



### A Normal Day

She was a housewife. Her typical day starts with doing laundry and taking care of her baby.



### The Old

He was 92 years old and still very healthy. He went to the river bank to collect garbage to make extra money.



### An Alley

Guangzhou has many village, and Xiaozhou Village is the most famous for its aura of art.

### An Old House

This is a typical old house whose wall was partly made of shells.

### Burn Incense

It was a prosperous small temple on the roadside for native people to pray for good luck. People would write down their wishes on the red paper.

Family The man who is the uncle of these two girls is babysitting them. These two girls were listening to their uncle telling a fairy tale.









### Work without Weekends

Stories of Sichuan Workers



These workers are from Sichuan Province, who are now working for their fellow villager in Guangzhou. They worked very hard with a steady but small salary.

They need to powder their products and polish them with many chemicals. The working process carried physical risks for sure and they had no weekends to take rests, but they still felt grateful for their boss for providing such a good job opportunity which is much better than being construction workers.

They had dinner in their canteen. The cooks were relatives of them. They celebrated festivals by slaughtering some chickens and rabbits they kept for a good bite. Sometimes their boss would like to treat them with a fancy dinner at a restaurant nearby.

They told me that they felt satisfied about their jobs, and they were living a good life.



The little girl is their boss's daughter. She likes playing in the empty factory loft. The workers also enjoy playing games with her.





It is a small temple for villagers to pray for good luck. The would gather together to burn incense and make paper offerings at god and goddess.

Small Temple

I dear vallal

allal







### Sitting

This old man was more than 90 years old, whose back was getting more and more humpbacked every year. He lived in an old house unaccompanied.

### Walking

This man was more than 50 years old, He walks like a model displaying a set of fashionable clothes.

### Squating

This man was more than 70 years old, He was thin but well set up. He had nothing to do during day time, but watching people.





### Crying

The little girl went after his father who had to go to work. She burst into tears, crying," Don't go, Papa!"

### Working

It just rained, and he had not collected enough garbage to change for money, which made him very upset.

Working The young man had dropped school at an early age. He made a living by building houses for others. He was working at a roadside in the old area of Haikou.

6 Mins





### Urban Space

It was on August,2010 that I was the first time to come to Shenzhen as a university reporter candidate for Shenzhen universiade. Shenzhen was developping rapidly,changing with each passing day. I was amazed by its urban space, and took pictures to record what I saw. Enjoying the convenience the urban space provide as we are do, we should not leave the builders behind.

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### Education

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